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or War



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see bottom of last page of text



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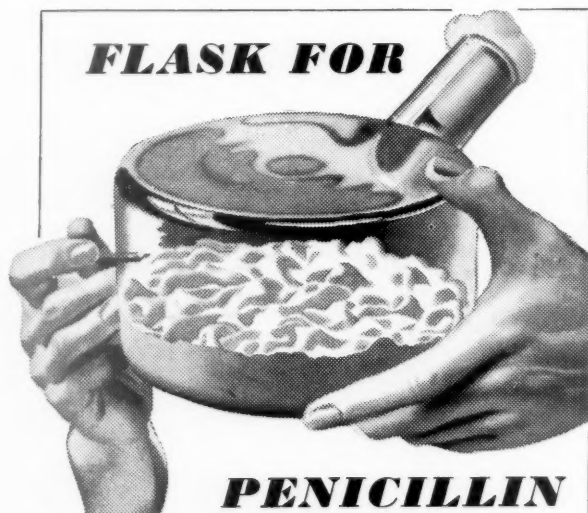
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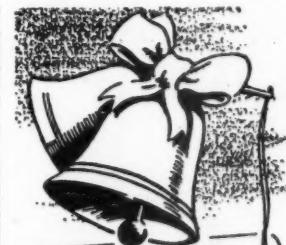
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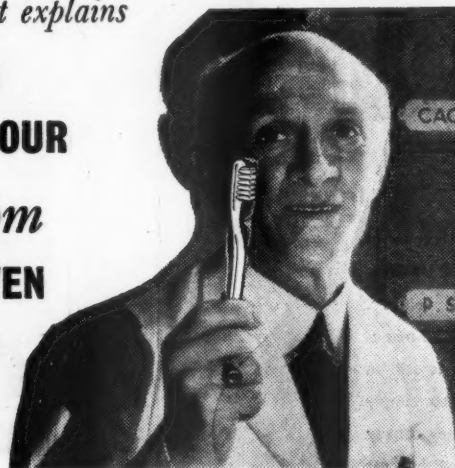
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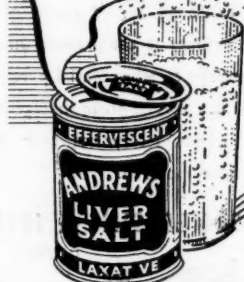


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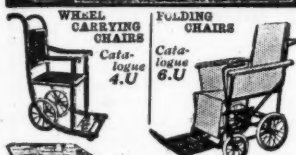
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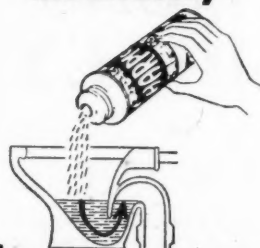
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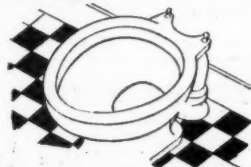
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the lavatory



1 Sprinkle in Harpic, and leave as long as possible. Harpic's cleansing action reaches right round into the S-bend.



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More children are killed or seriously injured by darting carelessly into the road than by any other kind of accident.

You can help to prevent this tragic waste of young life by teaching children proper road behaviour.

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I teach the "kerb drill" to all children under my care and I see that they learn it so thoroughly that they do it instinctively.

This is the kerb drill—

1. At the kerb HALT.
2. Eyes right.
3. Eyes left. Then, if the road is clear,
4. Quick march.
Don't rush—cross in an orderly manner.

If I drive a car I keep a special watch for children.

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Space presented to the Nation by
the Brewers' Society



EXAMINATIONS IN PRISON CAMPS

BOOKS URGENTLY NEEDED

HUNDREDS of prisoners of war are studying for the examinations of over 70 societies and institutions, ranging from surveying to chiropody, from accountancy to spectacle-making. The Educational Books Section of the Red Cross and St. John has already despatched 207,040 books and 8,436 study courses. Many of the books needed are now unobtainable. Please see if you have any of the books listed here, or any other works of a similar type. Books must be in good condition and unmarked. They should be posted to the address below.

SPECIALLY NEEDED:

1. Standard histories of America, Russia, New Zealand, Australia and Europe (Pre-Nazi).
2. G. M. Trevelyan's histories of Italy and England.
3. Modern pre-war books on Travel and Exploration.
4. Chambers' or Oxford English Dictionaries.
5. Modern books on the Ballet, especially Russian ballet and professional stagecraft.
6. Modern books on House Decoration and Furnishing.
7. Yacht Construction, Boat Building and Yacht Cruising.
8. Books on Horse Breeding and Cattle Breeding.

 The Secretary, Educational Books Section, Prisoners of War
RED CROSS & ST. JOHN WAR ORGANISATION
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(Red Cross & St. John Fund, registered under the War Charities Act, 1940)

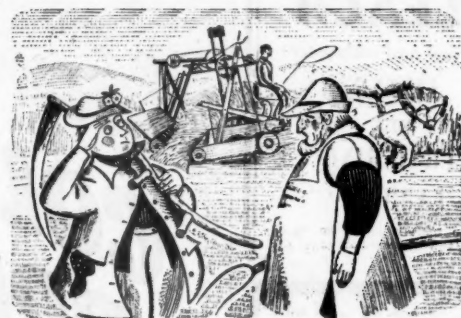
This space has been donated by the CRITTALL MANUFACTURING CO. LTD.



Until then . . . "Chops are very nice to-day . . . or what about a mixed grill?" Until then, we aren't faring so badly. But many things are scarce and vital to the war effort. Rubber is one of them. Tyres must be kept at correct inflation pressure. Embedded flints must be removed from the treads as frequently as possible.



FORD MOTOR COMPANY LIMITED, DAGENHAM, ESSEX



'tis against nature'

AND SO, indeed, it must have seemed to those countrymen of nearly a century ago whose incredulous eyes witnessed the beginnings of mechanised farming; whose ears, accustomed to the quiet rhythm of corn going down before the scythe, now rang with the rattle of strange contrivances. On the land, as in other spheres of human activity, the machine had come—to stay. But, however great its efficiency, inclement seasons and poor markets can still make vain the farmer's labour . . . It is upon a sympathetic understanding of his problems that the Westminster Bank, ever since its foundation in 1836, has based its service to the farmer—an understanding born of long experience and an unusually close connection with the rural communities in this country.

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There are two special reasons why "Three Nuns" Empire Blend Tobacco saves the smoker money. It is scientifically cut to burn slowly, each ounce lasts longer, you smoke fewer ounces a week. It is made from fine leaf which is favoured by the lower duty on Empire Tobacco. To enjoy the fullest pleasure of smoking at a moderate cost, take to "Three Nuns" Empire Blend.



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PUNCH

OR

THE LONDON CHARIVARI



Vol. CCVI No. 5389

May 17 1944

Charivaria

We are now at the penultimate stage of the last act, of the eve of the climax of our pre-invasion threats.

Expensive and ostentatious weddings are rare nowadays, although there was a case recently of the happy couple's being presented with some second-hand furniture.



A B.B.C. book-reviewer says that novelists are hard put to it to make a living. The trouble is, many are also hard kept from it.

A man clad in plus-fours and a bowler hat who had been creating a disturbance was taken to Bow Street. They flatly refused to have him at the Savile Row Station.

"Nobody is nervous in Germany," says Dr. Goebbels. At the first hint of jitters a person becomes a body.

A shopkeeper declares that unless he can get more supplies he will be forced to put up his shutters. No doubt he would soon get several pretty good offers for them.

The situation in Eire has now become critical. It does not trust anybody.

The Licentious Soldier

"We don't have conscription normally in England, but in war time every man who isn't exemplary must be a soldier."
Schoolgirl's essay on "Our Army."

Londoners are lunching much earlier. Sometimes it is impossible to get an evening paper to read with the midday meal.



A brewer wonders what the public really remembers about pre-war beer. Nothing much perhaps except that even then it wasn't like pre-war beer.

A new song is entitled, "If You Can't Get Beer, There's Plenty of Water Everywhere." Try it over in your five inches some morning.

Cause and Effect

"Tennis racket (Spalding), 13½ lbs. Half dozen Dunlop balls, hardly used."

Advt. in Local paper.

On the occasion of his retirement a registrar has been presented with a barometer. On its dial is inscribed "For better—for worse."

A writer on health remarks that the pre-1939 car-owner is probably walking more now than he ever did in his life. The answer of course depending on just how pre-1939 his car was.

The Nazis have given up hope of the Japs' assisting them. As a last resort they may have to rely on the Germans.

A writer says the taxicab meter was a Roman invention. The taxi itself, however, is purely a modern legend.

There is now some talk of making radio comedians queue up to use that same old joke.

An old lady who had travelled fifty miles to see a Cup-tie calmly took out her knitting needles as she joined the queue. She meant to get in somehow.

The Unbeliever

I MET a man about a week ago who took a very firm line about badgers. He said they didn't exist. "Somehow or other," he said, "the idea has grown up that the people wish to be told stories about this preposterous animal, and letters are written to *The Times* and to *Country Life* about it. But there aren't any. If there were, I should have seen one—and I haven't."

I said I had.

"Where?"

"In a wood."

"Pure hallucination. A lot of people have told me that they have seen ghosts. But I don't believe it. I've seen none myself. What was this thing doing?"

"Moving about."

"Was it eating anything?"

"Not that I noticed."

"Did it emit any groans?"

"No."

"Did it carry its head in its hand?"

I was thoroughly annoyed. "One of my earliest recollections," I said, "is that of being taken to see a live badger in a cage. It was in Leicestershire. It was kept by a clergyman. His name was Twigg."

"How do you know he was a clergyman?"

"How do I what? Well he wore black clothes and a dog-collar."

"Just as I thought. It was probably a disguise."

"There were badgers," I said, "in Ken Wood at Hampstead quite recently. They came into people's gardens."

"Did you see them there?"

"They came at night, and left their traces."

"You're sure you don't mean burglars?"

"Look here," I said. "There is a badger at the Zoo."

"Probably a small Panda."

"How do you know there is a Panda at the Zoo?"

"I've seen it."

"How do you know it wasn't a large badger?"

"Because there aren't any badgers."

"When I tell you that I know farmers who give a guinea a year to badger-digging parties, because they say the badgers eat their young lambs, when I say that you can see the traces of badgers at any time in hundreds of places, when I assure you that books have been written about the lives and loves of badgers, photographs reproduced of badgers and their young—"

"Ectoplasm," he said.

"Badgers make admirable pets. There are people writing to the papers who honour and cherish them. These people sit down to tea with their badgers and drink milk with them. Badgers are very tidy. They live in setts, and are drawn by dogs—"

"Like the Eskimos."

"They are plantigrades. They bring out their beds to be aired. They are obstinate. They bite. They eat roots, beetles, worms, rabbits. The shriek of a badger at night is a very terrible thing."

"So is the shriek of a ghost."

"Probably many of the stories about ghosts originate from the cry of a badger."

"You might just as well say that many of the stories about badgers originate from the cry of a ghost."

"Possibly the trolls and gnomes were badgers."

"Possibly the badgers were gnolls and trolmes."

"Badger-baiting was one of the most popular sports of our ancestors."

"So was killing dragons."

"What do you really believe about badgers?"

"In an excessively urbanized country it is found necessary to invent stories of glamour and mystery about the countryside, and the wild creatures of the woods. Badgers is one of them."

"Are one of them."

"Is one of them. There may have been badgers long ago, just as there were dragons and griffins. But they are gone."

"Shaving-brushes are made of badgers' hair. I once wrote a poem about one that I had to throw away. As far as I remember it began:

Shall I pour water on thee from the geyser

Badger on that that was a tuft of thine

Or strew soft shaving papers silently
Or scatter old blades from my safety-razor . . .

It was a very beautiful poem, and seems more beautiful now. It went on—

"Are you asking me to believe that this utter rot is any evidence?"

"Hundreds of thousands of people have seen, loved, hated, killed and lived with badgers."

"So you say. I've seen foxes, stoats, weasels, stags, hares, but I've never seen a badger."

"There must have been birds you haven't seen."

"Very few. Some may have got by without my noticing them, but I am prepared to take them on trust. You don't suggest that badgers fly from tree to tree or sit about on telegraph wires?"

"They are nocturnal."

"So are owls. I've seen lots of owls."

"Look here. Have you never seen a stuffed badger in a glass case?"

"Synthetic, probably."

"There must be plenty of post-war planners in this country that you've never seen except in photographs. But you believe in them."

"I accept their existence. There would be no point in inventing them. I've told you the reason for inventing badgers."

"If I took you to a certain wood, and you waited long enough in a certain place without moving until it was dark, then you would see a badger come out."

"How could I see it if it was dark?"

"Well, you'll have to go and see a badger dug, that's all."

"I should not do that because it would be cruel."

"How could it be cruel if there aren't any badgers?"

"It would be if there were."

"Do you deny then the whole testimony of Natural History books, encyclopædias and zoologists?"

"Paid propaganda."

The man was becoming tiresome. "Just because you've never seen a badger," I said, "you say there aren't any. Very well. Do you often go through Trafalgar Square?"

"Almost never."

"Can you believe there's a haystack in it?"

"No."

"I thought so. Just because you don't pass by Trafalgar Square every day on a bus as I do, you think there is nothing there except loud-speakers and lions and Nelson and flags and advertisements, and people going to hear music at the National Gallery, and American soldiers covered with pigeons, and you suppose I'm a liar when I say there's a haystack in it."

"Yes, I do."

"Very well. Come and see then."

We went. There wasn't. Some idiot had burnt it down.

"Don't ever talk to me about badgers again," said this man.

I shall not.

EVOE.



THE LISTENER



"... well, you know how these things are—SOME wanted a three-legged race and SOME wanted a ploughing match..."

News from the Suburbs

MY DEAR MOTHER,—I don't know if you are particularly well-informed on the subject of landing-craft. If not, do not bother to read it all up. I can tell you practically anything you want to know. At least, I have it all down in a notebook and it is only a question of finding the notebook.

Now take the Landing Craft Tank (or LCT, as it is known to us). It is a craft of pretty simple design. 95 per cent. of it is for carrying tanks, 3 per cent. for the engines and the remainder for the crew. There is very little room for passengers—that is, inside. Either the passenger stays on top, or if he descends below he effectively prevents the commanding officer from using his bed. I know. I have been a passenger, both while the commanding officer was asleep and not.

The craft is very flat underneath.

This is both to conform to the shape of the tank underneath and also to permit the craft to run aground every so often. When the craft goes aground by design it is known as a Combined Operation, on other occasions as a pretty poor show. The general idea is that the tanks go off at the front end while the sailors stay on board. This is very sensible of the sailors, as there is nothing more nerve-racking than the spectacle of a tank performing complicated manoeuvres on a crowded beach. Inside the ship they are practically harmless.

But I should begin at the beginning. I was on board this vessel because there was an exercise going on in which she was playing some part and I wanted to see the exercise. It was a simple sort of exercise, a kind of preliminary to a bigger and better one later the same evening. We just had

to take some tanks across the sound and come away again.

Everything went fine at first. We went down below, and the galley-slave did some ham and eggs, and the first lieutenant, who was aged 19, told me about Sicily, and time went like a flash. The next I heard from the external world was a kind of grating noise and we were on the beach and the drawbridge was down. The tanks were moving off. All we had to do then was reverse the engines, withdraw off-shore and wait some twelve hours or so for the next phase of the exercise to begin. Unfortunately the craft would not withdraw. It stayed wedged to the beach.

We did all we could, I should think. The engines reversed like mad, they hauled in on an anchor at the back, known as the kedge, and I even walked aft myself to redistribute the weight,

but we remained immovable. Since the tide was falling the period during which we could get off at all was mercilessly short. Personally I viewed the situation without alarm, for at least I could now go ashore dry-foot and stretch my legs and examine, in the melancholy evening light, the evidence of the destructive power of modern artillery, the beach being one that was regularly shelled every time there was an exercise.

It was the commanding officer, whose name was Sproget, who told me this in rather a gloomy voice, and even when he said that the next exercise was due to start in about twelve hours' time I felt no cause for alarm, until I realized that twelve hours was just about the time the tide would take to come back. I had not realized before how inconveniently rigid Nature can be. I probably looked a little startled.

It was all very well for me, Sproget said, but how about his ship and him?

I said of course they will never fire if you are here, and he said since it will be about five in the morning how do you think they will know I am here? And I said someone will tell them and they'll call it off, and he said if you knew our admiral you'd rather it wasn't called off. After all, people did survive direct hits on LCTs, and the artillery was not supposed to fire on the piece of beach we were on but at another piece some twenty-five yards away.

I said what's twenty-five yards, and he said it's something and how accurate are Army gunners, and I said very accurate but twenty-five yards isn't much if the wind's blowing, and he said it'll be blowing all right—in fact that's our best chance as it'll blow the tide up quicker.

And I said well, can't we tell someone we're here, and he said there's a telephone on the other side of the sound which is six miles away as the crow flies but about forty-five if the crow has to walk. Then I said there's wireless in the tanks, and he said it's a pity you didn't think of that ten minutes ago as they've gone now and I doubt if you can catch them up, although I don't suppose they go very fast across country, and I said only about ten miles an hour.

At this point it became clear that no useful purpose would be served by continuing the conversation in this strain.

It was a nice little problem: Stay with the vessel and get her off on the rising tide, or leave the vessel and watch her drift down into the artillery barrage on the rising tide.

The tide took about eight hours to go out. Perhaps it is more deceptive in the fading light of the first quarter of the moon. By the time the moon had set it seemed as though the tide had turned but it now lacked but six hours and five minutes before the artillery barrage was timed to start. The first five of those were long enough, but the sixth was not an hour at all—it was about a couple of lifetimes.

Gradually the water lapped around the lower sections of the vessel, then started to climb the sides. The vessel remained as solidly fixed as before. For all she cared, it seemed, the tide could come over the top and she would still prefer the beach. In the east there was a faint suspicion of light.

It was then that the horse appeared. The horse was actually on the artillery range. It seemed to be eating the grass with considerable gusto, probably having acquired a taste for burnt TNT with its food. Nor was it the kind of horse that pays any attention to shouts. It was at that moment that the vessel began to stir. It was also exactly seventeen minutes to the moment when the artillery would begin.

I have never really been fond of horses. They have always struck me as independent conceited creatures, ready to throw their heads up in a childish tiff and walk away just when one is about to grasp some portion of their anatomy that will give one some measure of control over their movements. Then they stop again. This one was a typical horse.

At eleven minutes before the artillery was due to begin I had walked after the horse from one end of the range to the other and had run back again, failing to make contact with the horse throughout the whole manoeuvre. Three minutes later its owner appeared. At the same moment Sproget hailed me from the vessel to say that she was afloat and would it not be a good plan to move off.

When I had my voice under control I asked the horse-owner if he had been notified of the proposed artillery practice in that area and suggested that he might take the responsibility of deciding whether his horse stayed there much longer or not.

He looked at me in surprise.

"Firing?" he said. "That has been put off. It was William Blackett that told me. He is our policeman and he is a very reliable man. If he says the soldiers do not fire, the soldiers do not fire." He paused and looked at his horse. "I don't know why you bother my horse," he went on in a rather vexed voice. "It is very early in the day for his exercise." At this

point the horse looked up in an interested way. It then turned its attention to Sproget, who was dancing somewhat on his bridge.

I am glad to say that P.C. Blackett's information was correct.

The journey back was rather dull, as we had eaten all the ham and eggs the night before.

Your loving son HAROLD.

Memo to Headmaster

REGARDING closing of your school, the Education Committee instruct me to say the blame is not at your door if the boys from the trust homes turn it into a gaming house and worse. We feel you have done all that in you lies and Mr. Tingle has pointed out to H.M. Inspectors that the place had a good enough name before the boys from the trust homes at your suggestion got among the children from scattered homes and scattered seeds of revolt, so that it has put a blight on a good-class district.

The matter of what happened when H.M. Inspector Mr. Little came round has been gone into but little has come out of it. He says he was lucky to get out alive, but he may have stretched things somewhat when he says catapults were the only rule and retaliation was difficult as the main hall was barricaded across with a battery of blackboards, as you only have fourteen in the place. Mr. Tingle has gone to great lengths to lay before H.M. Inspector the past records of the school before you came there. It cannot be that the boys from the trust homes are not to be trusted as some suggest, as we have reports from employers that these boys are always among the best, taking all before them and leaving nothing to be desired.

The scholars are to be distributed to other schools where the discipline is better and where an eye can be kept on the ringleaders. Your qualifications as an organizer will be borne in mind and the building can be made good use of as a slaughter-house.

We feel you are entitled to this assurance of your clean hands in the matter. J. TINGLE, Chairman.

Mr. Gallacher on the Wing

"Mr. Gallacher: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the best information he could give to this House would be that the employers were in goal?"

Parliamentary report.

Lady Addle's Domestic Front

Bengers, Herts, 1944

MY DEAR, DEAR READERS,
—As the great Lord Salisbury once said to me, with that profundity of thought that was part of his genius, there is nothing so attractive as a kitchen garden.

I was of course showing him our own at Coots Balder, which was without doubt one of the most beautiful and original ones in England. All the vegetables were invariably planted, I remember, in *straight rows*, while every bed was bordered by tiny box hedges, each one lovingly clipped by hand by our splendid staff of devoted gardeners. Round the entire garden went a magnificent high brick wall, with—at the four corners and over each entrance—the simple dignity of a lone stone coot. It was a very fine sight.

But more of gardens anon. To-day's letter must be devoted to vegetable cookery.

First, however, let me say something in tribute to my dear friend, Bee Cracknell (Lady Beatrice Cracknell), whose sad death occurred so recently. She was a staunch vegetarian, and indeed something of a scientific pioneer, for she claimed to have discovered a new force called Vitamin Q, which had been undetected hitherto because it has absolutely no effect in any direction whatsoever—but Bee said she always *felt* it was there all the time. She was also a leader in vegetarian wear, especially charcoal shoes, lichen fur coats, and underclothes woven of the finest sisal, so as to avoid causing any psychological or spiritual depression to the denuded silkworm.

Yet there was nothing of the crank about Bee, and she was the jolliest person imaginable. When I remarked on this one day she replied: "Do you know why I am so jolly? Because I swallow seven raw jumping beans every morning. They are the secret of internal perpetual motion, keeping one's liver in perfect condition."

It seems tragic to think that only a few short weeks elapsed before I was sent for to see poor Bee on her death-bed. Her face was ravaged by grief and she looked a broken woman. In whispers she told me her awful news. She had just found out that jumping beans jumped because a small maggot (from some underhand motive surely) lived inside them. For years therefore Bee had been eating flesh unwittingly. The shock brought about the stroke from which she died—a martyr to her belief if ever there was one.

Though I admire these brave chemists who discover pillories and talcum and all those wonderful things in our daily fare, I cannot say I really understand the scientific side of food yet, though I intend to master it when I have a moment to spare. I am, however, a very strong believer in the properties that exist in Mother Earth, and personally I consider that vegetables should never be washed before cooking. Does a sheep wash the turf before he crops it? Or a dog remove the mould from his muzzle before eating his dinner? No. Then who are we to improve on Nature's ways?

This theory of mine reminds me of a pretty story concerning two of our evacuees, one of which I have already mentioned in these pages—little Gary Briggs. The other, Marlene Ruddock, is about the same age, and the two are firm friends and often exchange remarks at meals about their innocent little ploys which we grown-ups don't attempt to understand. I was somewhat surprised the other day, however, when we were eating a parsnip-and-cocoa mould (a speciality of my own), to see Marlene stare at her plate and then say "Six." Gary replied "Five," upon which Marlene said with some heat, "That's a lie. You're five. I'm six." Both children then caught my inquiring glance, blushed and became silent.

It all seemed very mysterious, for as they were both seven years old it was unlikely that they could have been discussing their relative ages, so after lunch I followed them to inquire into the secret. And what did I find? The dear creatures had been collecting objects which they had found in the food at Bengers. Gary had four pebbles, a piece of straw and an earwig. Marlene, three pebbles, a drawing-pin and two clothes moths. (They had tied!) I felt rather ashamed of the clothes moths, but delighted to think I had started these little Londoners on Nature study, and I have given them some beautiful mahogany collecting cases which Addle had as a boy for bird's eggs, and told them I will do my best to provide them with more specimens.

I must close with a word about salads. I have, I trust, made it abundantly clear that, in my belief, it is for us women, no matter what class (only last week I had quite a long talk with the daughter of a New Year Honour), to help our country by food economy whenever possible. I believe there was a fashion not long ago for something

called the "Hay Diet"—though I think perhaps to feed on nothing but hay is a little extreme. But don't be afraid of experiments. Dandelions have long been used in salads—very well then, try groundsel, plantain or fresh lawn-mowings. If your evacuees are ill, or leave, it is Hitler's fault for making such substitutes necessary. Just one word of advice, however. If you still have servants they are better suited by a more conventional salad of lettuce, cucumber, tomato and hard-boiled egg.

French dressing can still be achieved quite successfully by substituting linseed for olive oil, or making love to your garage proprietor and getting him to give you just a teacupful of oil from some place he calls "the sump."

M. D.

This Talking at Breakfast

AND so he got a bowler hat.
"I don't mind telling you that when I get my discharge a bowler will be very useful. I'm going to open a shop, and it will be the kind of shop where I shall need one."

"You intend to sell shrimps?"

"I think everyone should keep a shop after the war, if only as a snub to the entire German race."

"Wouldn't it be less trouble to put our fingers to our nose?"

"They called us a nation of ruddy shopkeepers. So my idea is that once we have given them an almighty hiding we should sedately resume our places behind the counter, just as if nothing had happened."

"With a side-glance, I suppose, as if to say: 'Has anyone anything funny to say this time?'"

"Whatever we did before, the greater the number of people who join the movement now the greater our own security. If you keep the kind of shop that stays open till nine every day of the week, including Sundays, you don't have any time for joining silly societies."

"My one objection to coming in with you is that I should get so frightfully tired of always selling the same thing."

"That is exactly why tobacconists are allowed to sell walking-sticks."

"I beg your pardon?"

"You must have noticed, surely. There is a very pleasant freemasonry.

among shopkeepers. They appreciate that a man who is buying tobacco is probably going for a walk anyway, and so to save the chap behind the counter from going crackers they agreed that he could have a bundle of ash-plants one end of the counter and give himself a rest every now and again by selling those."

"If he is counting on his customers starting out on a walk, is there no danger of him trying to sell dogs?"

"No, they rely on one another's sense of fair-play. Why do you suppose the hay and corn merchant sells coal?"

"I can't imagine. Unless it prevents hay fever."

"The fishmonger sells pork sausages."

"Well, anyone would get tired of selling fish. It amazes me that a fishmonger ever gets anyone to marry him."

"Here is the point. He calls himself Fishmonger and Poultryman. He says nothing about sausages, which are certainly not Game. You are not surprised to find a fishmonger selling rabbits, but his only excuse for sausages is that they give him a break."

"The milkman keeps to his——"

"The milkman sells tins of biscuits. At a pinch you might allow that pots of honey have some remote kind of connection with a dairy, though I doubt it myself. But biscuits are completely outside his sphere. And you would think that a newsagent and bookseller would get sufficient variety; but no, it is not the right sort. He gets sick to death of things to read, and so he is allowed the sole option of selling fireworks during the first week of November, though I don't see that he has any more right to do so than an undertaker."

"It all seems to me rather like women trying on other women's hats."

"Where do you go for cameras? The bicycle shop? The ironmonger's? No—the chemist's! What is your explanation of that? Are films drugs?"

"It's fortunate, I think, that the various vendors all agree apparently which shall sell what by way of light relief."

"Oh, I dare say there was keen competition at one time. I have sometimes thought that the grocer must have put up a keen fight for something he was crazy to sell, only to be defeated, otherwise they would not have offered him such generous compensation as a toy post-office at one end of his counter."

"He seldom serves there himself."

"It keeps his daughter quiet. Where do you go to get your eyes tested?"

You find a place marked Watchmaker and Jeweller. The reason for that is that all day long the poor fellow is clapping that spy-thing into one eye and examining watches, or peering at diamond rings, and eventually that would drive him nuts."

"So would the incessant ticking."

"For pure mental ease he has that room behind the shop, and he takes people into it and sits them down, so that they have to look at things through gadgets he puts in front of their eyes, and tell him what they see."

"I wonder the greengrocer couldn't think of anything more original than bottles of vinegar."

"What about the hairdresser? He didn't bother about selling anything unusual. His complex was a secret urge to stick a striped pole above his door, so that people would have to ask him what the idea was."

"No one saw any objection, I should think, or indeed any point."

"If anything it suggested he sold flags."

"Of course the people who have spoilt the whole idea for you are the big stores, who couldn't leave well alone."

"I don't care. I'm going to be the only Gents' Outfitter in the City who sells fish."

Altruists, Please Note.

"SELL YOUR FURNITURE NOW—Others need it badly."—*Advt. in Local paper.*

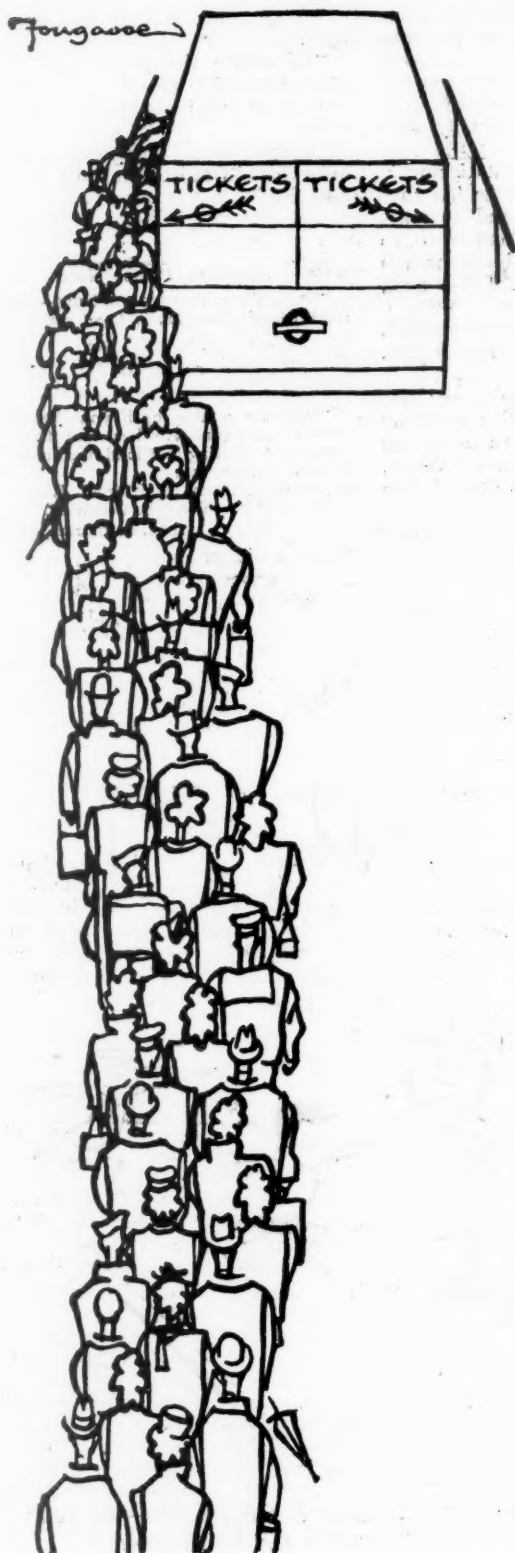
"THERE'S greater joy if you always use — Gramophone Needles, and they are well worth waiting for; loud, medium, soft, 200 ls. 2d., inc. tax. makes a delicious drink from Household Milk. Try it. You'll be delighted."

Advt. in Bristol paper.

Stings a bit, surely?



"Calling F for Freddie, calling F for Freddie—just peel off and zoom over to your Grandma's for the tin-opener."



The Phoney Phleet

XLV—H.M.S. "Recoil"

OUR minelayers lay mines in rows,
I'm told. So if the German knows
Just where the lines are placed he goes
Bang up the middle avenue
In safety, shouting "Sucks to you!"
This is a noisome blight.

Lieutenant Bilge, R.N.V.R.,
Showed by the aid of algebra
That minefields on a circular
Or, preferably, spiral plan
Would stop this nuisance; and the man
Seemed to be wholly right.

So H.M.S. *Recoil* was sent
To try this by experiment,
Her rudder being sharply bent
To keep her in a constant spin.
It worked: she dumped her cookies in:
The place was Hitler-proof.

But why, oh why, did Bilge commence
To lay from the circumference,
Rim, edge or margin inwards, hence
Discerning when he reached the hub,
Core, centre, focal-point or nub
He was mined in, the goof?

Technical Hitch

THE lone and level streets stretched far away, and the lights at the deserted cross-roads had shown red for two and a half minutes. The taxi-driver screwed himself round slightly and after a short sharp struggle with his sliding window at last made enough of an aperture.

"You undertake to testify?" he demanded.

Cogbottle sat up with a start. "What?"

"You undertake to testify?"

"Undertake to testify what?"

Upfoot, leaning back in the other corner, said "He means the lights must have gone wrong."

"Dead right I do," said the taxi-driver in a tone of strangled rectitude, making great efforts to prevent himself from twisting back into position. "They do this sometimes."

"Who do?" Cogbottle said.

Upfoot explained "He means the lights," and the driver went back to his original demand: "You undertake to testify?"

Cogbottle sat forward and stared out of the windows. It was dusk; a warm wind was whipping pieces of paper along the empty North London pavements. There was not another being or vehicle in sight in any direction.

Cogbottle sat back again and said to Upfoot "Let's get this straight. What he means is I suppose that if he drives across against the red lights and a policeman suddenly springs up out of the ground and taxes him with inefficiency, will we undertake to back him up against the policeman by declaring that the lights have been red for so long that——"

*The Secretary,
Punch Comforts Fund,
10 Bouverie Street,
London, E.C.4.*

MY DEAR SIRs,—Your most generous parcels of woollies have come safely to hand and I should just like to take this opportunity of expressing my sincere thanks.

I shall be grateful if you will pass on to all your readers who contribute to your comforts fund my sincere appreciation, for it is only through the unseen, and all too often unacknowledged, work of such people that we are enabled to issue to our seafaring lads those extra garments which they need so much and appreciate so warmly.

With all good wishes and very many thanks for your generosity to us at all times,

I am, Yours sincerely,

Chaplain

Registered under the War Charities Act, 1940

"Exactly," said Upfoot.

"Well it's obvious that they have, isn't it?"

"Have what?"

"Gone wrong. I mean I don't know what the ordinary interval is, but it can't ever be meant to be as long as all this." He looked at his watch.

"Nearly four minutes now," said Upfoot, looking at his.

"But on the other hand," Cogbottle went on after thinking a little, "he probably means more than that. I mean anybody would naturally back a driver up in anything like that without being . . . You mean more than that, don't you?" he said to the driver.

"Dead right I do," the driver replied hoarsely. "Might take me to court, they might. Then what? You undertake to testify?"

"In court, months hence, in the middle of the Second Front," Upfoot murmured from his corner, "everybody impatient with trivial civilian matters, probably nine-tenths of London's taxis converted into landing craft or temporary hutments, no non-priority vehicular travel at all, and another cut in the cheese ration—why, if we set foot in court on such an errand we'd be lucky to get away before they had us under 18B."

Cogbottle nodded thoughtfully. "Anyway the magistrate would say . . . But wait a minute. How does a case like this work? Do they call witnesses in the same way as in a criminal case?"

"Search me," said Upfoot.

"Do they?" Cogbottle called out to the driver.

"Nah," the driver said. "This'll be between the Quarter Sessions and the Assizes. See, there's the Assizes and then there's the Quarter Sessions. When there ain't no police jurisdiction in the Metropolitan area it's an Old Bailey case, but all them judges is on circuit, being Michaelmas."

Cogbottle swallowed twice and then said to Upfoot "He sounds as if he knows."

"Ah," Upfoot said, "but he doesn't sound as if he means anything."

Cogbottle put his hands on his knees and leaned forward with a look of concentration. "Well," he said, "let's try to work out what it would mean. First we give our names

and addresses to the policeman, after he has contemptuously rejected our testimony about the lights—"

"He copies them off our identity-cards," Upfoot said.

Cogbottle felt in his pocket and then said "This introduces an extra complication. My other suit, at this moment hanging on the back of a chair in—"

"Have you got your ration-book?"

"No."

"Clothing-book?"

"I—wait a minute . . . No. But I can remember my number."

"Nah, that's a thing I never could do," declared the driver, disengaging himself from the wheel and twisting round another inch with an air of condescension. "It's the figures, see? Won't stick in my head. No head for figures, never had. I got a memory for names and places: when you said 'Limpopo Road' it what you might call clicked into place in me mind how to get there: I says to meself if I take the straight up orf Euston Road between—"

Cogbottle looked at Upfoot and then interrupted "Wait a minute—we didn't say Limpopo Road, we said Leanpopper Grove."

"Euston Road between Seymour Street and— Leanpopper Grove!" said the taxi-driver in a tone of stupefaction. "Why that's two miles 'n more south of here! You have to fork left at the top of—"

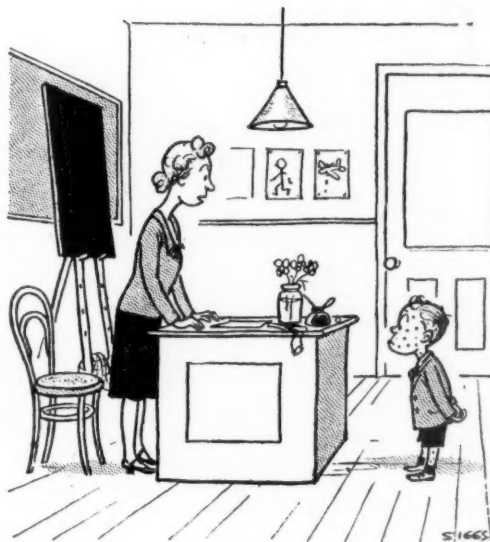
"Well," said Upfoot, "that's where we want to go, anyway."

This threw the driver into a state of activity. He thumped his window shut, swivelled back into his seat, flung off his hand-brake, let in his clutch, and, briskly making a hairpin turn, drove his taxi back down the road the way they had come.

Cogbottle turned round to look through the back window, and then sank into his seat with an unfathomable expression. Upfoot looked at him and said "What colour are those lights now?"

Cogbottle said "Need you ask?"

R. M.



"And write out twenty times 'I must not come to school with spots'."



"I sure am going to tell the folks back home that the swellest part of England is Scotland."

On a Wireless Set

THOU too-oft ravish'd bride of quietness,
Untir'd recorder of the whispering air,
With mirthful song and speeches numberless
That pourest forth abroad thy mingled fare:
What noisy shades, what wild cacophony
Of singers or announcers or of both
Haunt thy still form and walnut-grained
face?

Is there no quiet? no fair maidens loth
To wake the sounding echoes pent in thee?
Hath silence fled? or peace left Portland Place?

Heard bulletins are good, but those unheard
Are better; therefore, ye soft pips, pip on;
Not to my ear, tun'd to no single word
Of silver-tongu'd Liddell or Robinson:
Strong youth, that chantest to the dawning
clear

Thy crooning numbers for the sluggish limb,
I shall not heed thy musical command;
Fair nymph before the mike, I shall not hear
Thy talk of syrops, pies or comfits cann'd;
Nor lift my heart to greet the morning hymn.

Ah! magic coil—yet thou shalt not remain
For ever silent or for ever dumb;
Nor to thy mystic altar all in vain
Thy honey-voiced priests in order come:

Most secret engine! marvellous machine!
Slave to our lightest whim or gentlest touch,
To be forgone, or else to be enjoy'd:
Our listening ear made sensitive and keen
To hear thy voice; or at thy too, too much
A numbed sense high-sorrowful and cloy'd.

Who is this coming to the microphone?
Is it that man again to cast his jest
New-minted on the garrulous unknown?
What sailor comes to answer our request?
What fair economist? What little street
Is emptied of its Joad this brain-sick hour
To prate of Plato old or Socrates?
What gardener talks of scarlet-veined beet,
Of onions, or the clotted cauliflower,
Or sounds the praise of upward-climbing peas?

O cubed shape! fair instrument! with wire
And knobs and shining dials overwrought,
E'en now thy accents wake an old desire
And ancient echoes tease our wistful thought:
From aching memories of another day,
Too faint for dreams and well-nigh past recall,
We idly seek in midst of present woe
That golden time when thou again shalt say
"Reuter is truth, truth Reuter—that is all
Ye know on earth and all ye need to know."



ALT FOR NORGE!

Impressions of Parliament

Business Done

Tuesday, May 9th.—House of Lords: Ships That No Longer Pass . . .

House of Commons: Mr. Speaker Blows the Gaff.

Wednesday, May 10th.—House of Commons: Talk of—Money.

Thursday, May 11th.—Both Houses Repair to Another Place.

Tuesday, May 9th.—Definitely a day for the Looker-on who (on the authority of Bacon) many times sees more than gamesters. There is nothing quite so fascinating to most of us as a really well-blown Gaff, and if that Gaff happens to be blown by someone so distinguished and full of humour as Mr. Speaker of the House of Commons—well, that is satisfaction indeed.

Commander STEPHEN KING-HALL has laboured hard and long to create the somewhat evangelically-named "Friends of Hansard," all pledged (it is said in a locked and darkened room, with the Commander standing mystically before them, a copy of *Hansard* flaming in his hand) to further the knowledge—and the sales—of The Official Report of Parliament, which is the unimaginative and uninspiring title of our old and esteemed friend, *Hansard*.

But most of us thought that *Hansard* was the sort of thing one kept on one's shelves, or sent in single copies to admiring maiden aunts or critical chairmen of local Party organizations. Few dreamed that it provided propaganda for the roar and rage of politics, that its unexciting pages might kindle the flame of political passion in the constituencies.

Handsome Sir REGINALD CLARRY started something when he innocently asked Mr. Speaker if he had anything to say about the limits for the correction of M.P.s' speeches in *Hansard*. Just that. Mr. Speaker had not been unprepared.

He said that the only alterations permitted were the elimination of split infinitives, faults of grammar, and redundancies. None must alter the sense of a speech—

"If any!" muttered an irreverent listener.

—or make any but small corrections, even these being subject to the discretion of the Editor of *Hansard*.

That all-powerful officer, Mr. PERCY COLE, sat looking imperturbably on, celebrating his first day as Chairman of the Parliamentary Press Gallery by listening to this reaffirmation of the freedom of the Press.

Mr. JOHN MCGOVERN, who never loses a chance of a sly one at his more orthodox colleagues, inquired whether M.P.s who voted one way and were "interviewed" by the Whips could have their vote altered, but Mr. Speaker clearly considered a split vote something more irrevocable than a split infinitive, and did not allow this concession.

He said he would have a warning about the limit to corrections printed inside the daily editions of *Hansard*. This shocked Captain LEONARD PLUGGE, who thought it "infra dig."



AFTER THE BATTLE:
A MODEL MINISTER

"I am not in favour of the prolongation of the war-time departments beyond their period of usefulness." (Cheers).

The Minister of Economic Warfare.

(he used the abbreviation) when it was remembered that *Hansard* went all over the world. This piece of news pleased Commander KING-HALL, but rather shook Mr. Speaker.

Mr. AUSTIN HOPKINSON (who presumably never uses notes) acidly commented that the need for corrections would soon disappear in face of the growing habit of Ministers of reading their speeches verbatim.

Then Mr. Speaker performed the age-old ceremony of Blowing the Gaff, with his customary grace and skill. He gently mentioned that some Members wanted too many corrections made, and that he knew of one who wanted inserted in the report of his

speech the descriptive (and presumably complimentary) line: "Loud cheers from Honourable Members opposite."

This very nearly stopped the show.

Then Mr. FRANK BOWLES asked why, in spite of an enticing advertisement in *Hansard*, he had been unable to buy a mere 10,000 reprints of a speech "by an hon. friend of his" wherewith to regale his constituents and justify his own vote in a recent division. This, he had been told, was a bit too much, and he wanted to know why the Editor of *Hansard* should not live up to his presumed motto: "You want the best speeches, we have them!"

Again Mr. Speaker took the stand, as the talkies have it, and mentioned that a week ago Members had wanted reprints to the tune of 55,000 copies. This was more than three times the average number in a whole year before the war, and, since they were sold under cost of production, it was really becoming subsidized propaganda. So he had stopped it.

Captain PLUGGE (who is, beyond doubt, a rival for Commander KING-HALL's throne as Lord High Friend of *Hansard*) made the surprising assertion that "no one would think it strange for anyone to order 100 copies of *Hansard*," so why should they raise their eyebrows at a demand for a few thousand extracts?

Mr. RALPH ASSHETON, who apparently represents the Stationery Office (among other Departments) on the Treasury Bench, promised to see what could be done, and Mr. COLE will doubtless form Hon. Members into a queue outside his office soon—or put up a notice saying: "No Extracts." Or (as in fish-shops) possibly both.

Mr. BOWLES and others who had their eyes on the future, when voting hens may come home to roost, were rivalled by Sir JOHN WARDLAW-MILNE (of Kidderminster), who, perhaps in hope of a time when Adolf Hitler may be our dishonoured guest, asked that, as soon as possible, more carpets should be manufactured in Britain. It was not clear whether the intention was that the fallen Fuehrer should be interviewed on the newly-made carpets or whether they were destined for his dietary. Anyway, Mr. DALTON promised that British carpets would not be forgotten.

Mr. CHURCHILL announced that it had been decided to set up a Royal Commission on equal pay for men and women—an announcement that caused Mrs. CAZALET KEIR great joy. Others, who know more about the traditional speed of Royal Commissions, were less deeply moved. The Prime Minister shrugged resignedly and went out



"As from to-day, all embarkation leave is stopped until further notice."

before his Education Minister, Mr. "RAB" BUTLER, moved back into the Education Bill an unamended version of the clause which had been amended against the Government's will, and dealing with—equal pay.

After all the rumpus and fuss (with votes of confidence and what-all) the clause had aroused, it was restored in a very short time. And nobody seemed at all distressed, or even overjoyed.

In their Lordships' House Lord SELBORNE, Minister of Economic Warfare, mentioned that blockade-running by the Axis had now virtually ceased, and that in addition to the enemy ships we sank we must also have regard to those that never passed at all—in the night or otherwise—but stayed quakingly in their home ports.

Lord SELBORNE (unique among Ministers) proclaimed his view that as soon as the war in Europe ended there would be no further need for his Ministry. This form of Ministerial *felo-de-se* the House found engagingly novel—even if a little surprising.

Wednesday, May 10th.—Mr. EDGAR GRANVILLE wanted to know to-day who represented Newfoundland at the conference of Empire Prime Ministers,

and was told: "The Dominions Secretary."

"But," asked Mr. TINKER, "as there is doubt about the various pronunciations of the name of Newfoundland, will the Prime Minister say which is correct?"

"I was taught at school," gravely replied the Premier, "to call it Newfoundland. But perhaps Newfoundland is more correct—"

"Newfnd'nd!" cried experts.

"Newfnd'nd!" countered other experts.

The rest of the House laughed—and gave it up.

Mr. RALPH ASSHETON, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, promised that those who wanted reprints from *Hansard* should have them, if they were content with 1,000 copies each for the present. Prices would be economic—and up.

Then Colonel WALTER ELLIOT moved a motion approving a recently-issued White Paper on that most fascinating

of all topics, money. But the Paper dealt with international monetary policy, and that is a very different matter, associated in the minds of most with Black Magic and that sort of thing. So it was not perhaps surprising that most people found the rather attractive weather then prevailing in the Straits of Dover a greater pull than the discussion of the highly technical ins-and-outs of international monetary policy. Which was probably most unjust to a number of learned and eloquent speeches. But very human, all the same.

Thursday, May 11th.—To-day, both Houses went to "Another Place" to listen, on the neutral ground of the Royal Gallery, to a moving speech by Mr. MACKENZIE KING, Prime Minister of Canada.

It was a brilliant sketch of the war situation, of Canada's vast part in the effort of the United Nations, and of the good that may—nay, must—yet come out of the evil of war.

"We must see the vision of a better future!" said Mr. MACKENZIE KING.

Peers, M.P.s, distinguished visitors, cheered. Then, very thoughtfully, they went their ways.

The fact that goods made of raw materials in short supply owing to war conditions are advertised in this paper should not be taken as an indication that they are necessarily available for export.



"Mind you, old Fred's the sort of chap who always calls a bulldozer a bulldozer."

More Basic Classic

WE must at once confess certain errors which, in spite of our best efforts, crept into our first exercises. But most of them were in Basic's favour—that is, we gave Basic credit for possessing words which, in fact, it does not. We used the word "honour" and the verbs to "stand" and "lead", for example. These are not to be found among the famous eight hundred and fifty words on the sheet of notepaper. There were a few other similar errors. On the other hand, "soft" is a permitted word: so our "not hard" was wrong. Apologies. But here we go again:

... we shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the

landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight on the hills; we shall never surrender.

We will not seem to go more slowly or be without effect. We will go on to the end, we will have fights in France, we will have fights on the seas and the greater seas, we will have fights with increasing self-belief and increasing force in the air, we will keep them away from our island, whatever the price may be, we will have fights on the small stones near the sea, we will have fights on the landing grounds, we will have fights in the fields and in the streets, we will have fights on the sloping places: we will never give in.

Little Miss Muffet
Sat on a tuffet
Eating her curds and whey:
There came a big spider
And sat down beside her,
And frightened Miss Muffet away.

*The small girl Muffet
Took a seat on a lifted bit of
grass;
Eating two sorts of the produce of the
cow.
There came a great example of a
certain small insect which takes
flies
And took a seat at her side,
And through fear sent the girl Muffet
away.*

Her hair is like the snow drift,
Her neck is like the swan,
And her face it is the fairest,
That e'er the sun shone on;
That e'er the sun shone on,
And dark blue is her ee,
And for bonny Annie Laurie
I would lay me doon and dee.
*Her hair is like the mass of snow which
is put together by the wind.
Her neck is like the large white bird
you see on rivers.*

And her face it is the most good-looking
That ever the sun gave a bright look
upon,
That ever the sun gave a bright look
upon,
And dark blue is her eye,
And for good-looking Annie Laurie
I would put myself on the floor and make
ready for death.

For the sound of his horn brought me
from my bed
And the cry of his hounds which he
ofttimes led.
Peel's view - halloo would have
wakened the dead
Or the fox from his lair in the morning.
For the sound of his noise-apparatus
sent me from my bed,
And the cry of his smell-dogs which he
was often leading.
Peel's cry "I can see him!" would have
put an end to the sleep of those
who were no more
Or made the desired brown animal come
out from his hole in the morning.

Jack and Jill
Went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water:
Jack fell down
And broke his crown
And Jill came tumbling after.

Jack and Jill
Went up the slope
To get a bucket of water:
Jack had a fall
And made cracks in the top of his
head
And Jill came falling heavily after.

Thou shall not make to thyself any
graven image, nor the likeness of any
thing that is in heaven above, or in the
earth beneath, or in the water under the
earth. Thou shalt not bow down to
them or worship them. . . .

You will not make for yourself any
thing marked so as to be like any person,
nor any thing that is like any thing that
is in the sky above, or in the earth under
it, or in the water under the earth. You
will not put your head down before them
or do public acts of respect to them. . . .

If any of you know cause or just
impediment why these two persons
should not be joined together in holy
matrimony, ye are to declare it. This
is the first time of asking.

If any of you have knowledge of a
cause, or just thing in the way, why these
two persons should not be joined
together in the well-respected way of
religion, you are to make a statement
about it. This is the first time of putting
the question.

The boy stood on the burning deck
Whence all but he had fled:
The flame that lit the battle's wreck
Shone round him o'er the dead.

The boy was upright on the burning flat
part of the ship
From which all but he had gone away.
The flame that gave light to the things
broken in the fight
Made light about him over those that
were no more.

Home is the sailor, home from sea,
And the hunter is home from the
hill.

The seaman is back, he is back at his
house from the sea,
And he who goes after animals is
back at his house from the sloping
place.

Ring out the old, ring in the new.

Make a sound with bells to say that the
old is out, make a sound with the
bells to send in the new.

Sink me the ship, master gunner, sink
her, split her in twain.
Fall into the hands of God, not into
the hands of Spain.

Send the ship under the sea for me, chief
man of arms, send her under the
sea, make a division of her into
two parts!

Let your fall be into the hands of the
Greatest Ruler, not into the hands
of Spain.

And the gunner said "Aye, aye," but
the seamen made reply
We have children, we have wives, and
the Lord hath spared our lives.

And the man of arms said "Yes, yes,"
but the sea-men made answer
We have sons and daughters, we have
women joined to us in church, and
the Highest Person has kindly let
us go on living.

It is an ancient mariner
And he stoppeth one of three.
"By thy long grey beard and glittering
eye

Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?"
It is a very old sea-going man,
And he is stopping one of three.
"By your long grey chin-hair and eye
with small moving lights in it
Now why are you stopping me?"

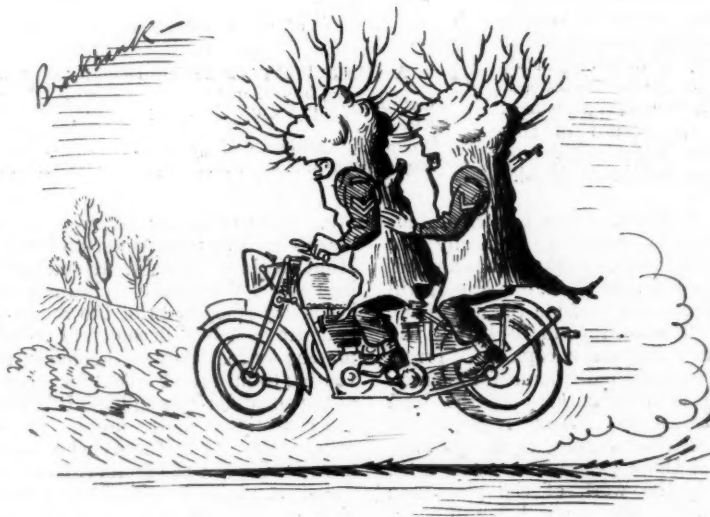
I have only done my duty, as a man is
bound to do.
With a joyful spirit, I, Sir Richard
Grenville, die.

I have only done what I had to do as a
man is forced to do.
With a feeling of pleasure, I, the
respected horse-man Richard Gren-
ville, go to my death.

A. P. H.

Infinite Variety

"The queen of Egypt in those days was
a certain clear patterer."
Schoolboy's dictation.



"Frankly, this is ridiculous."

At the Play

"HOW ARE THEY AT HOME?" (APOLLO)

It would be pleasant to know what *Major George Webber* of the U.S. Army is writing to Mrs. Webber of Indiana about the goings-on at *Farfield Hall* in the English North Midlands. On the Saturday night that he is billeted there he becomes involved in a fantastic party. Others present are the owner, *Lady Farfield*, newly-appointed charge-hand at a local factory; two of her workmates with *Sam* the foreman, a shadowy *Jess Oakroyd*; a Left-minded Land Girl, brought up by a maiden aunt in Cheltenham but sounding like one of the Marx Sisters; a corporal of the Eighth Army, the Commodore of the B.L.A.D.S. (British Ladies' Auxiliary Defence Squadron, of course), two R.A.F. officers, a memory-haunted cook from Viennese grand opera, a period butler aureoled by the light of other days, and—most surprising—*Raymond Killigrew*, an elderly and much-billeted Civil Servant who craves for excess of music and, unlike Orsino, finds a string quartet difficult to mobilize.

In the opinion of *George Webber*, serious, kindly, impressively-domed, life at *Farfield* is decidedly odd, a major problem indeed. But it has its pleasures. How the record of this Arabian Night will colour the next mail to the Middle West!

Mr. J. B. PRIESTLEY has written his comedy of billeting primarily for E.N.S.A., to give to the troops abroad. Although few of them, one hopes, will accept it as a credible picture of life on the Home Front in 1944, they will certainly applaud a comedy of errors in its author's most bountiful manner. There is nothing here of the high seriousness of *Desert Highway* or *Johnson Over Jordan*, or the strangeness of those experiments with time. This is the work of the plain-man PRIESTLEY who wrote *When We Are Married* and *Good Night, Children*, and it is better than either of them, less boisterous than the first and richer in

dialogue and invention than the second.

The author calls it a topical comedy. A recent Commons debate on domestic help has made it even more topical than he could have expected. *Kenton* (Mr. CHARLES GROVES), the butler at *Farfield Hall*, is a crumbling ruin in charge of a Stately Home. Long used to the spacious days and to squads of servants—indoors and out—he cannot adjust himself to the troubles of 1944, no staff except a coloratura cook, wave

(Mr. RALPH TRUMAN), just back from four years abroad, and his young squadron leader (Mr. NOEL DRYDEN) have to agree on arrival that it looks like a Black Show. Mr. PRIESTLEY keeps the farce simmering through the second of the two acts—we are spared more than one interval—down to the last moment when *Lady Farfield* and her restored lover (who happens to be the Group Captain) are disturbed by the irruption of three remaining members of Mr. Killigrew's string quartet, raked by telephone from the deepest North Midlands. They are followed at once by what seems to be the entire G.H.Q. staff of the B.L.A.D.S., led by that "woman Blimp in solid ivory," *Commodore Pentworthy*, set on requisitioning the house. More bewilderment for *Major Webber* next day, and more hot news for his letter home.

As a rule Mr. PRIESTLEY depends less on situation than upon generously sketched character comedy. The plot is a good-humoured charade, and the talk—with the exception of a few bald patches early on—is lightly and continuously amusing. The cast, directed by Mr. BASIL DEAN, whisks through it at the proper pace.

Mr. JOHN SALEW is beautifully accurate as the observer from the Middle West. The evening's jewel, however, is the determined *Killigrew* of Mr. HENRY HEWITT, one of the bowmen of England, as highly-strung as his fiddle and—when conducting a personal enterprise of great pith and moment—a demon on

the telephone. Mr. JOHN SLATER is a gallant and slightly bewildered representative of the Eighth Army; Miss CARR presides graciously as the lady of the manor and the lathe; and one likes Miss MIGNON O'DOHERTY's rasping commodore, Miss HELLA KURTY as the cook who finds it so fatally easy to remember her Viennese springs, and Miss JENNIFER GRAY as the Land Girl whose maiden meditation on the triumph and destiny of man never fails to startle her friends. Finally, Miss ANGELA WYNNDHAM LEWIS, Miss PATRICIA LAFFAN, and Mr. GEORGE CARNEY deal ably with a little factory group which might have come from



A HINT THAT IT ISN'T DONE IN WAR-TIME

Lady Farfield Miss JANE CARR
Kenton Mr. CHARLES GROVES
Group Capt. Edward Camyon (R.A.F.) . . . Mr. RALPH TRUMAN
Major George Webber (U.S. Army) . . . Mr. JOHN SALEW

after wave of mixed billetees, incendiaries on the west wing, and not a Hunt breakfast in sight. His meanderings about Edwardian frolics and the legendary splendours of the servants' hall are couched deceptively in the present tense. They lead some of the visitors to mistake *Farfield* for a home of the squander-bug and the Idle Rich—assumptions most unfair to its owner (Miss JANE CARR) who, apart from working at the factory, has seen, she says, at least half of the United Nations war effort passing through the house. Still, *Kenton*—loquacious, silvery wraith—does his worst. In particular, *Group Captain Camyon*

the pages of *Daylight on Saturday*. Here it has curiously little chance. Miss LAFFAN and Mr. SLATER's Corporal carry off a neatly-written love scene, but one expected more from *Sam Cavethra*. He is not the factory musketeer he ought to be: for once, it seems, Mr. PRIESTLEY has been sparing with the right kind of Bruddersford ammunition. J. C. T.

"HE MUST RETURN" (CHANTICLEER)

Sam Weller's line, "Anythin' for a quiet life, as the man said when he took the sitivation at the lighthouse," might have been a good motto for the hermit of *Thunder Rock*. The hero of Captain ROBIN MAUGHAM's play, also a solitary—a pacifist musician out of tune with the world—prefers for his retreat a hut on a Syrian mountain-top. He is disturbed there by a small party which includes a convalescent officer of the Tank Corps; persuaded to come down and join the Tanks, he dies eight months later as a subaltern on the battlefield of the Libyan Desert.

The play is only intermittently dramatic. At present it is disjointed and needlessly abrupt. Captain MAUGHAM has yet to master his uncle's technique or sharpen his dialogue to the razor's edge. Still, at least two of his scenes have the right note—the rough stuff by lantern-light in a Knightsbridge "bivvy" a few hours before Rommel moves, and the slow fading of the close. Besides a clear performance by Mr. LAWRENCE PAYNE, a young actor with something of the Olivier manner, the Chanticleer production which ended its limited run last Sunday had two precise sketches by Mr. ROBERT MARSDEN as a Cockney corporal and Mr. MICHAEL HITCHMAN as a Syrian servant.

STRINDBERG's *Easter* is the next Chanticleer choice. When the company of a club theatre offers two new plays in succession—the first was a semi-political comedy by Major LIONEL BIRCH—turns its small stage into desert and mountain-top, and prepares to tackle STRINDBERG, none can doubt its keenness. The theatre is in Clareville Street, S.W., a minute from Gloucester Road Station; its future programmes may be worth watching. J. C. T.

"The salary figures which appear represent the averages of the notional grades used and therefore bear no direct relation to the actual salaries of the staff concerned."

Extract from *British Council Departmental Instruction*.

Ah, dreams, dreams . . .

All Set

IT had been wonderful of Gloria to lend me her cottage; to ask no rent, not even to object to children.

The pear blossom was dazzlingly white, the narrow borders round the door embroidered with the bright flowers of spring.

I sighed the sigh of satisfaction peculiar to the professional evacuee placed for yet one more term. Plans had come off. Decisions were shelved, problems resolved, bombs forgotten.

How ideal! A new-lit fire of sizzling logs, a bowl of lilac, a table laid for tea. Among the tea-things was a note from Gloria. What a welcoming touch!

"Darling," it ran—"So sorry to have to run off like this. I've left everything ready. Please treat the house as your own, won't you?"

"There are one or two things. The boiler I have arranged to have properly cleaned while I am away as it takes such ages nowadays, and the stove is to be thoroughly overhauled at the same time; but I know you are such a clever cook you'll manage on the oil-lamp—remember it takes about forty minutes to heat up. As coal is so scarce don't hesitate to cut down that monkey puzzle at the end of the garden. I've been meaning to for ages, and don't a bit mind your using the wood rather green. The electricity you'll find is rather weak, so go slow, won't you: only one light at a time is the rule, and would you mind not using the wireless at all. I did leave the dogs after all. The *poms* only need exercising once a day, and both the bulldogs are used to sleeping on my bed—I always think myself that their snores are so companionable. And

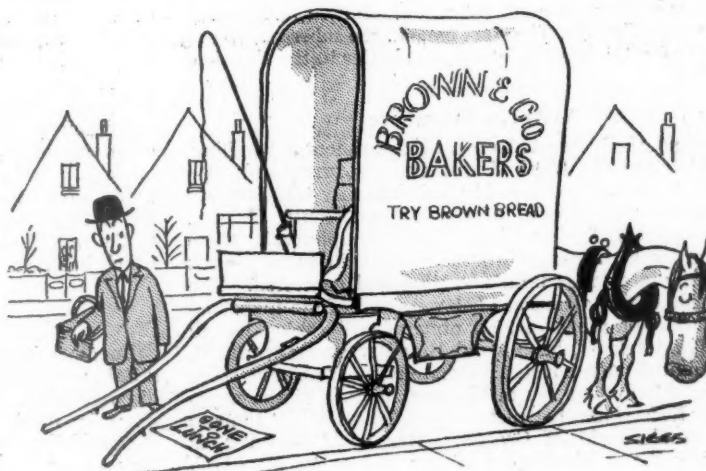
Fifi is due for a bath. Did I tell you I had got a servant? She is a nice woman, I got her on probation from the Asylum, so naturally she can't do much work, but she loves doing the flowers. She's a strict vegetarian, so you'll be a saint, won't you, and just knock her up some special dish for each meal. She can't eat lard of course, but if you let her have your butter and sugar and eggs in exchange she'll be quite satisfied, I know. As the weather is warmer you won't mind the glass being out of the drawing-room window, and I am having the chimney swept while the chintzes are away being cleaned. I know your love of gardening, but could you concentrate on the paths?—they are very weedy. I'll be delighted for you to use as many parsnips as you like—and, oh, yes, would you mind making my marmalade? I've saved lots of skins and I wondered if you could spare a few whole ones from your ration to add to it.

"It was sweet of you to offer to pay rent, but I *hate* to think of any money dealings among friends, so shall we say a nominal five pounds a week just to cover the fuel and things, and your baby-seal coat you once offered to sell me? But as you may feel uncomfy getting so much for nothing, I have had a brilliant idea and am leaving both the boys behind for you to look after instead of rent, as it were. They are in quarantine for mumps.

"Don't bother to thank me, darling. I always say I am only too glad to help a friend, and it's nice to think that when we are all stuck in sidings for the invasion you at least will be in clover.

Your devoted
GLORIA."

I always say there is nothing like a kind friend.



Our Booking-Office

(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks)

Service and Self

IN its flowing colloquial tone, though not of course in its subject-matter, *Wait and See: The Autobiography of Albert Thomas* (MICHAEL JOSEPH, 10/6), is reminiscent of Casanova's Memoirs, giving the same impression of being a transcription of experiences often recounted by word of mouth. Mr. THOMAS, one imagines, is an excellent talker, and feels, as Casanova felt, that his story should not be reserved for his personal acquaintances but ought to be communicated to the world at large. It is a fascinating story and may outlive many books with apparently more serious claims to the attention of posterity. Born in Devonshire round about 1880, the author showed his resourcefulness and power of managing people at an early age. He wanted to go on a farm, not like other poor boys to a paper-mill, and an old lady for whom his sister was working made the necessary arrangements. While at the farm he saved an army officer from drowning, or at least pulled him out of some shallow water into which he had fallen. The officer ("A fine-looking man . . . Class simply oozed out of him") was grateful, and got him a job as a page-boy in an Exeter hotel. There he was mothered by an elderly chambermaid, who passed on a racing tip by which he won £173. After enjoying himself on this windfall for eighteen months he became successively valet to Lord Charles Beresford and third footman to the Duke of Norfolk. Favourably impressed by the duke ("Class always tells"), he did not take kindly to "the Grand Old Man, the Butler," and presently left for the Boer War. On his return he tried various jobs, but what he calls his "longing for pomp and ceremony" made him unsatisfied whenever he was out of touch with the upper classes. As steward of a golf club, proprietor of a moorland café, and catering manager for exhibitions, he found ample scope for his varied talents, but his dream of happiness was not realized until in a Norfolk hotel he met a lady variously designated as Madame Dainty, Lady Dainty, Dainty and Lady Bountiful. Exquisitely beautiful, and extremely wealthy, she asked him to find "a nice haunted castle, not too big, you know." He found one near Bishop's Stortford, and there, assisted by his wife, by a chauffeur and a lady's maid, bent all his powers to creating a paradise for his mistress. One day there was a telephone call from London, Adam had returned, and Eve left her paradise for ever. The story ends in the sober serenity of Oxford with Mr. ALBERT THOMAS as butler to the Principal of B.N.C.

H. K.

A World Elsewhere

A sound theme wasted on a too sentimental handling, *The Rock and the Wind* (EYRE AND SPOTTISWOODE, 9/-) relates the fortunes of an old Cornish family translated to the Kansas and Oregon of the mid-nineteenth century. This is a time, for America, of violent upheavals where most order had been established, and still more violent intrusions into lands both unsettled and contested. The debit side of the abolition of slavery and of the industrial penetration of the West, an orgy of self-seeking for all classes and colours, has offered Miss VIVIEN BRETHERTON opportunities any novelist might envy. Here and there she has seized them, as in her grim picture of the negro riots in Kansas and her picturesque glances at the Chinese labour underworld of Oregon. Her book, however, is primarily the staple history of any and every matriarch

in a pioneering age. It takes far more stock of the typical domestic divergencies of *Trudy Tresellian* and her husband *Breck Farridon* than of the latter's technical and financial contribution, as engineer and stockholder, to the development of Oregon's railways. Stylistically everything is a little shiftless, a little perfunctory, and an abundant peppering of adjectives has reached the point when zest is impaired rather than heightened.

H. P. E.

"Turn that Darned Thing Off. . ."

The radio dramatist has a public at the size of which the novelist can only sigh. If he has only a couple of hundred thousand listeners he may well feel he is talking to himself. And then, he penetrates into the sanctuary of the home; he doesn't need to win old men from the chimney-corner; he catches them there. But with all this, whether he is tragic or comic, successful or merely dull, he knows he will be regarded impartially, with half-affectionate tolerance, as *The B.B.C.*; and in this country (things are different in America) he will be, except in the Sunday papers, beneath criticism. In England, as Stephen Potter has put it recently, "The critic smiles. 'I am afraid I never listen'—how many times, and in what good company, has he not repeated that phrase already. He will imply, and certainly believe, that broadcasting has produced nothing worthy of his study." LOUIS MACNEICE, therefore, has taken a pioneer step in publishing his radio play, *Christopher Columbus* (FABER, 6/-). To introduce it he has written a short essay on radio drama. It is inconclusive, perhaps all the more suggestive for that—but he makes the all-important points that working in sound is a new art as well as a new means of communication, that it is unnecessary for radio dramatists to write down to a symbolic "common man" grimly sitting by his fireside, and that the huge popular audience reacts eagerly to good rhythm and a good story. *Christopher Columbus* itself was first put out on the Home Service on October 12th 1942. It is a play by a distinguished poet which can stand on its poetry alone—the poetry of Moorish cities, of winding streets and walled gardens, of the desperate voyage to the "rimless rim of the world." And—here is the point—it is a play which can only be judged, not by the printed word but in the medium it was designed for—reading aloud. After the first broadcast many people were doubtful about the special music composed by William Walton (among them the *Daily Mirror*, which said it was the first time it knew Columbus was the hero of a musical comedy), and others were deterred by its length. But it was successful, it caught the ear of hundreds of thousands of listeners, because in the arrangement of his characters—sailors and tired old men, doubters and believers, weeping women, crowds and solitary self-communings—the writer had a true understanding of the counterpoint of the human voice. By this the play stands or falls. Addison, who liked to compare conversation to an orchestra, would have made a good radio critic. Let us hope that *Christopher Columbus* may be appreciated in the way it deserves, as a fine example of a popular art which has been just twenty years a-growing.

P. M. F.

The Praise of Vegetables

Lucullus, in condescending to a dish of roast turnips in a Sabine farmhouse, was neither the first nor the last to discover that one well-cooked vegetable can furnish a passable meal. Mr. AMBROSE HEATH'S *Vegetables for Victory* (GIFFORD, 5/-) enforces the same moral. The elementary cooking of every vegetable *au naturel* is

thoroughly described in this excellent little book, the author displaying an equally grateful indifference to the dietitian and to the English cook with her traditional handful of soda. This done, he goes on to give recipes for dishes in which vegetables predominate, so that meat, eggs, cheese and so forth become mere garnishes. He introduces such homely inventions as celery fried in batter on a celery purée—showing how one vegetable can double its rôle in the same dish, and caps them with such exotic importations as a delightful onion ragout that hails from Smyrna. The cook whose enthusiasm is fired by these and other enterprising novelties might do worse than search secondhand book-shops for such last-war trophies as *The Belgian Cook-Book*, compiled by refugees, and classics like Elizabeth Lucas's *Vegetable Cookery*, where more admirable mixed dishes on much the same lines can be found.

H. F. E.

Ronsard

No one who reads Mr. D. B. WYNDHAM LEWIS's *Ronsard* (SHEED AND WARD, 12/6) will lightly take the risk of diverting to his own head the blows which Mr. WYNDHAM LEWIS rains on Walter Pater's. Nevertheless, what that "wan, elderly, secluded, rather timorous Oxford don of daintiest culture" said about Rabelais may fairly enough be applied to Mr. WYNDHAM LEWIS himself—"No one can turn over the pages of Rabelais without feeling how much need there was of softening, of castigation." For the proper appreciation of Ronsard there must, one supposes, be a happy mean between the languid daydream in which Pater murmured "*Mignonne, allons voir si la rose . . .*" and the thousand-bomber raid during which, as the bombs fall on everyone from Henry VIII to Dadaists and Surrealists prancing to Voodoo tomtoms under a jungle moon, Mr. WYNDHAM LEWIS calls to the doomed world of to-day to listen to Ronsard's message before it is too late. "It (Ronsard's message) implies humiliation, confession, penance, reparation; a bitter and salutary medicine, bark-and-steel for a nation's soul." Ronsard as a kind of Peter the Hermit of the Renaissance is a surprising figure, but it would be unfair to a very delightful and stimulating book to suggest that Mr. WYNDHAM LEWIS consistently, or even frequently, presents Ronsard in this sombre and forbidding guise. The great value of this study of a poet known to most English readers only by a few poems in the *Oxford Book of French Verse* is in the copious selection from Ronsard's verse with which Mr. WYNDHAM LEWIS has illustrated every aspect of the poet's talent and the chief episodes in a life devoted, for the most part, to love. Apart from Mary Stuart, whom he worshipped from a considerable distance, there were six women who at various times, and not always successively, embodied the ideal for Ronsard. From Mr. WYNDHAM LEWIS's skilful elucidation of these experiences the reader will form an impression of their total effect which may perhaps be confirmed by the portrait-bust of the poet reproduced by the author. It is a melancholy disillusioned face, sensitive, intelligent, with a touch of sardonic humour, the face of an authentic if not of a very great poet.

H. K.

Captives of Circumstance

Mr. WILLIAM KEAN SEYMOUR's first novel, *The Little Cages* (ROBERT HALE, 8/6), reminds one of Blake's statement that a robin redbreast in a cage puts all Heaven in a rage; and though the captives in the book are humans and the wires convention and circumstance, the story is told so movingly and without rant that one is both enraged and sickened over the seduction of poor silly *Doris* by a weak well-to-do cad, by the enticement of *Harold* by a girl who

played politics and landed young men with equal skill, and by the bewildered, bewildering death of the father in a hospital ward. It would be a sordid and rather hopeless tale if it were not for the shining character of *Mrs. Hamley*, wife, mother and charlady. It would have been so easy to have blotched her virtue with sentimentality, and tempting to have given her gifts at the end of the book, but the author does neither. He leaves her in the Chelsea slum, putting her own feelings in what she would consider to be their proper place. Her character is full of tonic ingredients, and Mr. KEAN SEYMOUR describes the other people just as well though less affectionately.

B. E. B.

"That Unhoped Serene"

A clergyman during the last war suggested that all too old to work should be kept in bed for the duration: some of the characters in *Tranquillity* (FABER, 7/6), by WINIFRED PECK, go further than that fuel-flash of a quarter century ago and debate, in effect, whether the aged should be allowed to live in bed or anywhere else. The scene is a nursing home, from which the book takes its name, and we are shown the three sisters who own and manage it, their nurses and their patients, almost all, and by design, people too old or too ill ever to take up life in the outside world again. The characters of this fortuitous collection of people under the roof of *Tranquillity* are etched with exquisite insight; some, like the rough and greedy *Nurse Clegg*, in a few revealing lines, some, like the helpless, dauntless, humorous *Mrs. Arroll*, with a loving wealth of detail. The book's action covers only a few hours of the busy life of the home—hours that, as night draws near, are darkened by a sense of doom which culminates in a disastrous air-raid; hours which see many questions answered and many problems solved in one way or another. This is a book which every thoughtful reader will rate very high and one which should answer with comfort many who question the usefulness in the life of the world of "that unhoped serene that men call age."

B. E. S.

From Rurik to Stalin

Mr. GEORGE SAVA, disclaiming the title of professional historian, sets out—in *Russia Triumphant* (FABER, 15/-)—to trace the story of the common people of Russia through long centuries while Persians and Tartars, Varangians, Lithuanians, finally Germans, have swept across the land and left it essentially unchanged. He seeks to base his study on the existence of a double thread that he finds running through the whole—on the one hand a leaning to the autocracy of Byzantium associated with the early dominance of southward-looking Kiev, and on the other a recurrent assertion of independence linked with the rival city of Novgorod. Material relevant to the theme proving rather scanty, he is driven page by page to choose between repeated repetitions of his original rather nebulous dual-influence thesis. To be sure no tale of Russia can be without its startling aspects, and Mr. SAVA can turn effectively to grim affairs like the revolt of the Old Believers, who perished in thousands rather than accept changes in Church ritual that now seem unbelievably trivial, and the growth of serfdom to a point where serfs were practically a form of currency among the land-owners. His short estimate of the culture of Russia of to-day is the best part of a book that will suggest to many readers that after all there is something to be said for the more concrete forms of history—written by the professional historian. C. C. P.



"Cousin Agatha doesn't know the way from the station, dear, so ring them again and ask if the 11.45 is nearly due yet."

Cuckoo in Town

THE cuckoo, much belauded bird,
Has lately, so we learn, transferred

Himself to Town,
A matter that has caused remark
To those who in the vernal Park
Stroll up and down.

And well may Londoners rejoice
To hear that unaccustomed voice
Up in the sky
When even we who dwell remote
On hearing his returning note
Are warmed thereby.

For after all it tells of Spring,
About the only decent thing
The villain does,
Of clearer skies and milder air,
Fresh green and cooler underwear
And bees that buzz.

But all too soon that forked refrain
When heard again, again, again,
Becomes a bore,
We recollect his evil fame,
The crimes attaching to his name,
To say no more.

We ponder on the egg that's dropped
For decent warblers to adopt
And blindly hatch,
The mother-bird to whose wild breast
The raptures of a peopled nest
Convey no catch,

The growing chick, a thing of doom,
Who, finding that there isn't room
Enough for him,
Serenely tips his foster-young—
Sweet songs that never will be
sung—
Over the brim.

Then, cuckoo, let the poet choir
Acclaim your charms with lute and
lyre,

My simple oat
Shall loftier be, though harsh and rude;
It's your unfailing turpitude
That gets my goat.

And go to Town, if so inclined.
The sparrow's nest is all you'll find,
A bird with pep
Who'll call his pals in half a shake
If you start fooling round, and make
You mind your step. DUM-DUM.

“Goat (British Alpine) for Sale, reasonable.
Kidding May.”—*Local paper.*
Not kidding anybody else?

Incident at Twenty-One Fifteen Hours

THE facts are very simple. I was fire-watching. There was no fire. I was tired of fire-watching. I was walking in the Square. It was very quiet, a tabby cat and a small major-general sharing the field. It was still light. And as I wandered by the gardens a hawthorn bush let out a loud deep sigh. It was the kind of sigh you might expect from a melancholy Suffolk Punch or from a big full-chested person who had decided that life was hollow at the centre.

Now I want to make it clear that I am not the man who expects his path to be strewn with such phenomena as sighing bushes. Some do, I know, and show small surprise when high-grade oil gushes from the hot tap in the cloakroom or a school of goldfish comes cantering across the lawn to greet them. Apart from a rather ugly practical joke played on me nearly twenty years ago by a wretch named Ottershaw, nothing like this had happened to me before.

I peered inside the bush. There were dark tangled corners in it which made investigation difficult, and it was high, but obviously neither a horse nor a man were hidden. As I drew my head out a warden was passing.

"Anything wrong?" he demanded. I explained.

"You're quite sure it was a sigh?" "Absolutely," I said. "I was once standing beside an elephant in the Berlin Zoo when it made an exactly similar noise. There may have been a trifle more volume to the elephant, a matter of a few trunk-decibels, but the sounds were otherwise identical."

"I don't follow at all," the warden objected. "Because an elephant once made the same noise in Berlin it doesn't prove this was a sigh."

"I was about to add," I said, "that afterwards I learned from the head keeper that the poor animal had been in the act of dying from a broken heart. Some jungle drama, recollected through the thick end of the telescope of time, had doubtless upset the delicate warp and woof of memory and caused an emotional short-circuit."

The warden, who was examining the interior of the bush with his lamp, regarded me sternly.

"I take it, sir, you are not suggesting there is actually an elephant in this bush?" he demanded.

I was saved from reply by the arrival of an old lady, followed closely by a corporal in the A.T.S. The warden pointed to me as if I were the wrong sort of incendiary bomb.

"This officer here insists this bush has been sighing."

"Sighing what?" asked the corporal.

"Not *sighing*?" the old lady asked anxiously.

"Yes, madam," I said. "A loud clear sigh."

"Oh, dear. An aunt of mine had similar——" she looked at me curiously and broke off.

"There's nothing at all to be seen," the warden grumbled, backing out of the bush with his hair full of twigs.

"May 'ave been an 'orn in 'Yde Park," suggested the corporal.

The old lady took my arm and led me away from the others.

"Don't think me personal," she said, "but your health?"

"In my time," I told her, "I have tramped Harley Street smooth."

"Because my poor aunt——"

"But at the moment none of my disorders could possibly be responsible for my hearing such a sigh."

"Very strange," the old lady murmured. "You are quite happy in your work?"

"I love my work," I said simply.

"Very strange," she repeated, and we then rejoined the others. A small crowd had formed, which contained a florid man in a black hat who said he was a scientist.

"What you heard was of course an echo," he explained to me, too patronizingly, I thought. "We physicists are familiar with certain combinations of sounds marrying with architectural forms. You happened to be standing at the focus."

"Then you don't think it could have been the head of the Japanese over-ground movement committing harakiri?" I asked him.

"I'd say it was an owl," declared an American sergeant. "They make the goddamdest noises."

"Surely they snore more than sigh?"

"Anyway, we don't have owls in Belgrave Square," said the old lady stiffly.

"I shouldn't be surprised," someone else put in. "You get some funny things in Belgrave Square these days."

"You ask me, I tell you a peeg of the hedge," said a foreign gentleman on the outskirts of the crowd.

"A what?"

"E means an 'edge-'og," explained the A.T.S. corporal, who was no fool.

"This area has been urbanized rather too long, sir," purred the scientist, "for any creature in that category to have survived."

"You speak very true," agreed the foreign gentleman. "It is a peeg of the hedge. He make very funny song." And in corroboration of this statement he let out a long wailing snuffle; not unlike, to those who had heard it, the mating whinny of the rhinoceros.

"Ladies and gentlemen," I said, "may I suggest we stay perfectly still for five minutes, and if no further sigh occurs we forget all about it?"

"That's fair enough," declared our latest recruit, a clergyman.

Two minutes passed.

"There!" I cried. "You heard it?"

"S'right," said the corporal. "But it was 'er."

The old lady raised her hand.

"I really must apologize. A sigh sometimes escapes me willy-nilly."

"Well, try and make it nilly," said the corporal tartly, and we resumed our vigil.

But the next time there was no doubt about it. A long sigh, infinitely sad, came slowly from the bush, like the deflation of some titanic ambition.

"Gee!" cried the American.

"Coo!" cried the corporal.

"La-la!" cried the foreign gentleman.

"It's a night-jar, that's what it is," said a small woman in pink, with much conviction.

At that moment the sirens, so readily distinguishable from the owl, the hedge-hog, the Japanese Ambassador, and even the night-jar, began to wail. As the crowd broke up the corporal snatched my arm.

"It's a fair teaser, it is," she shouted. "You ought to write to the papers, you ought."

And so I have.

Well?

ERIC.



The Pen Hospital

HOMER'S suggestion was surprising enough in itself. That it should have been received without cynical disputation, adopted promptly and unanimously and put into immediate operation were facts of immense significance for the future of education.

Like any other staff-room, that at St. Morbid's is a hot-bed of individualism. It is natural enough, I suppose. Consider the schoolmaster's background. From the moment when he is first left alone before his class of jesting hooligans he is (in the ethical sense of the word) an egoist. Somehow the raw graduate must discover for himself the formulæ for complete authority and easy discipline. He must acquire sleight-of-hand, the rudiments of amateur detection and the knack of blotless registration. If he succeeds he may look forward to forty years of valuable service to the community: if he fails he is adored by his students and respected by all. The English are ever ready to ascribe a lack of the common touch to an overdose of academic genius. However, whether he succeeds or fails the schoolmaster does so by his own hand. That is the point.

I mention all this because I want to stress the novelty of any corporate activity by the staff of St. Morbid's. The air of suspicion which envelops all its internal dealings has hardly been stirred by four years of war. . . .

Homer's suggestion deserves, I think, the widest publicity. "Each one of us," he said, "almost certainly possesses a hoard of defective fountain-pens. They are tucked away somewhere—forgotten. If our resources were pooled we might well discover

enough components to make a dozen or so new pens."

We displayed our stock after lunch on Wednesday afternoon. It was an amazing collection. The number of spare parts totalled 146. What surprised everyone was the large number of pens that carried advertising matter. Pringle-Watt's hoard, for example, contained four presentation models from brewing companies and one from a table-salt manufacturer. It made peace seem very remote, somehow.

Charteris thought it would be unwise to proceed with the tasks of assembly until some agreement had been reached about eventual ownership. Cartwright suggested a points system (ten for a nib, five for a barrel, three for a feeder, two for an inner-tube and one for a cap*) whereby ownership became a matter of proportional representation. It was rejected. We felt that the infinite variety of the spare parts would make any such system inequitable.

A deadlock seemed inevitable until Pringle-Watt proposed that contributors should relinquish all rights in the assembled products, which should be offered for auction—the proceeds to form the initial capital of a fund to be called "Fire-Guards' Refreshments Pool." The only objection came from Biggot, a strict teetotaler. It was swept aside.

With all the zeal of the back-room boys we bent to our task of repair and assembly. As general secretary to the venture (the appointment was unanimous) I was excused technical duties. I busied myself with the preparation of accounts.

* Two points for a cap with clip

Half an hour's labour brought disappointing results. Several pens lay in a state of near-completion but not a single working model was ready. A brisk exchange of components went on. I watched, fascinated.

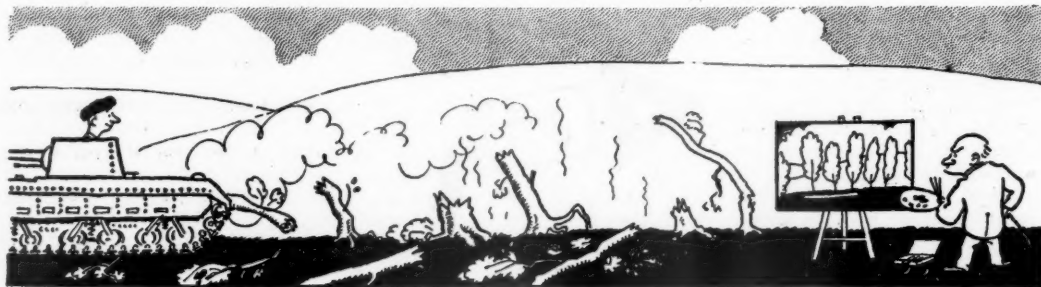
At last a shout of triumph from Pringle-Watt announced that our operations were proceeding according to plan. A complete break-through followed. When work ceased five good pens had been assembled. By pre-war standards they were crude. Their contours were unusual. Their joints were painfully obvious. But they were strong and efficient.

Pringle-Watt began the auction. The first pen fetched fifteen shillings after hectic bidding by Homer and Lemon. The second went to Charteris for twelve and sixpence. Pringle-Watt secured the third at six and fivepence. The fourth . . .

It was at this point in the proceedings (I was about to make a record of the transactions) that I missed my pen.

Pringle-Watt's argument was sound. "Admittedly," he said, "you have been the victim of an unfortunate mistake, but the five sections of your pen are now scattered among five pens. Unwittingly you have assisted the war effort. Your pen has converted a mass of useless rubble into five useful tools. Enforce your undisputed rights; insist on the reconstitution of your pen, and you destroy the whole of our work. And that, if I know anything about you, Sopwhittle, you will not wish to do."

I bought the fifth pen for thirteen and sixpence. Its barrel (in mottled green) is marked: "With the Compliments of Roscoe's Sparkling Ale."

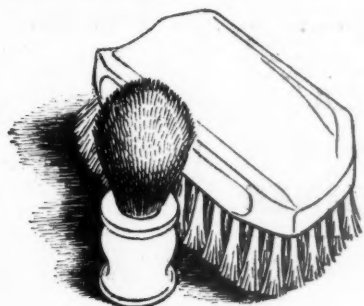


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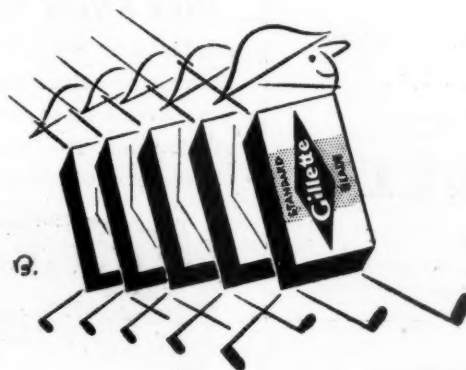


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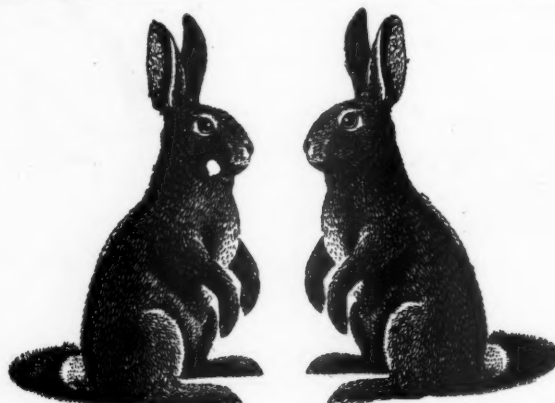
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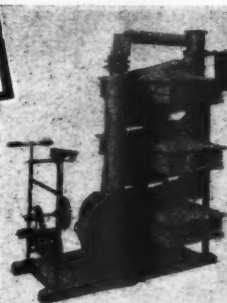
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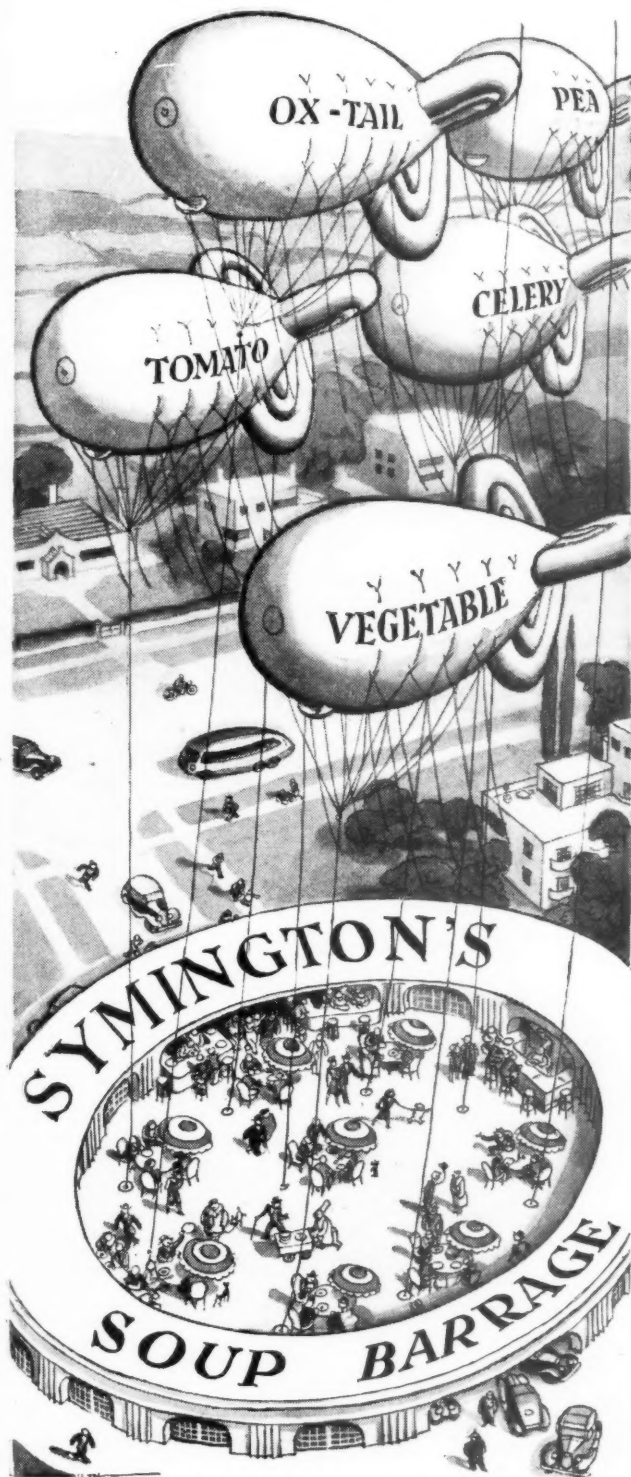
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